

This Jesus of Nazareth was a man unlike any other.

He was my teacher, my master, my friend, and yet I did not know him.

I travelled with him from the beginning. I saw him cast out demons, heal the sick, calm the storm, raise the dead.

I saw tax collectors and prostitutes rejoice in his presence. I heard the good news proclaimed to the poor.

I saw thousands fed and more gathered for the morsels from his mouth -- the tales of a topsy-turvy world in which the last shall be first and the first shall be last.

The kingdom – he said – was at hand – so near we could touch it – step into it – comprise it – with our hunger and thirst, with our mourning and meekness.

I saw the Pharisees and scribes chafe at an authority greater than their own.

He spoke of his own death but I would not hear him, rebuked his nonsense only to be rebuked myself.

When we entered Jerusalem, I saw the set of his jaw, the look of a man intent on a vision I could not fathom.

The crowds that day hailed him as one born to power – Save us! They cried. I was swept up by that emotion and dared to dream that Jesus of Nazareth would take his rightful place as the Messiah, the Son of God despite the contradiction of his message, and the donkey rather than a war horse.

When he insisted on washing our feet, I would have denied him. He knew that I did not understand, and could not bear to be served by the

Lord of my life. He showed us what it meant to serve and it did not sit well with me.

I did not know him who was my teacher, my master, my friend.

But he knew me. Knew my love for him, knew my yearning to be with him, knew my fear, knew the secrets I kept hidden – He knew that I would betray him.

No truer oath has ever been sworn than “I do not know the man” – and no falser one.

He knew me. He knew us. He knew his friends would desert him. He knew the crowds who praised him would cry for his crucifixion, and that those who were supposed to know God would close ranks against him. He knew our fickle ways and our love of power. He knew our good intentions gone bad and bad intentions made plain.

He knew us; he loved us, and he forgave us.

This Jesus of Nazareth was a man unlike any other.

He was my teacher, my master, my friend, and he died that I might know him and the power of his love – that all might know him and the power of his love.